

CONSERVATION GUIDELINES: NORTHSIDE NBD HISTORIC DISTRICT

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INTRODUCTION

The Cincinnati City Planning Department was asked to study the historic resources of Northside's Business District in August, 1981, by the Northside Community Council, Northside Business Club, and Northside Urban Conservation. From October, 1981, to April, 1982, a committee of community representatives worked with the Historic Conservation Office of the City Planning Department to draft guidelines and to determine district boundaries. Public meetings were held at the Northside Business Club, Community Council, and Coalition of Block Clubs.

The Planning Department wishes to thank the Study Committee for many hours of effort and encouragement to produce these guidelines:

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These guidelines are used by the Historic Conservation Board to review exterior changes to buildings in the historic district. The Northside NBD Historic District boundaries and guidelines were adopted by City Council on May 26, 1982.

GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS OF NORTHSIDE

The Northside NBD contains a mixture of buildings of varying heights, styles, and dates of construction. Most date from the turn of the century, are 1 to 3 stories, and are built of brick. The character of Hamilton and Chase Avenues within the district is established primarily by the fact that the buildings sit on the front property line and the avenues are lined with first floor storefronts.

Storefronts generally have tall windows and low windowsills. Upper floor windows are regularly spaced and contain double-hung windows with one-over-one panes of glass. Building styles found in the district include: Queen Anne, characterized by decorative brickwork, varied window treatment, and sometimes asymmetrical towers; Italianate, characterized by bracketed cornices, and window hoods; and vernacular styles, which do not fit particular stylistic categories but are simply detailed buildings which may contain some elements of different styles.

Buildings differ in age, height, and design, but all are sited on the sidewalk. Upper floor windows are regularly placed and line up with each other. Buildings have well-defined tops (cornices) and bottoms (storefronts). The district has great visual variety.

Some buildings have had first floor alterations or additions which are not in keeping with the character of the original building or the district. Many of these can be "brought back" to be more compatible with their surroundings.

Awnings and signs have traditionally been part of the neighborhood.

ALTERATION AND REHABILITATION REVIEW CRITERIA

GENERAL GUIDELINES

1. Since there is a variety of building types in Northside, each project should be reviewed individually. There are, however, a few guidelines that apply to all rehabilitation work:
2. Avoid removing or altering historic material or distinctive architectural features: if it's original and in fairly good shape, try to keep it.
3. Don't try to make the building look older than it really is.
4. A later addition to an old building may have gained significance on its own. Don't assume it's worthless just because it's not part of the original building.
5. Repair rather than replace wherever possible. If replacing, replicate the original – don't invent something new that "might have been."
6. Be sensitive to distinct stylistic features and examples of skilled craftsmanship.
7. Surface cleaning should be done by the gentlest means possible. Don't sandblast or use other abrasive methods. Cleaning may not be necessary at all.
8. New additions should look new. They should be compatible with the existing structure but should not try to copy the old building.
9. Before starting on a project, stand back and look at your building and how it relates to its neighbors. Uncover original design features that may be buried under layers of improvements. It takes detective work but there may be evidence of where original elements were located. Research may turn up pictures of what your building originally looked like.

ALTERATION AND REHABILITATION REVIEW CRITERIA SPECIFIC GUIDELINES

1. MATERIALS: REPAIR OR MATCH THE ORIGINAL AS CLOSELY AS POSSIBLE

Original materials should be repaired, restored, and reused whenever possible. Original materials should not be removed or covered. Where necessary, missing or deteriorated material should be replaced with appropriate recycled or new materials which match the original as closely as possible with regard to:

type of material	color	placement
size of unit	shape	detailing
composition	texture	
style	type of joint	

2. STOREFRONTS: THEY SET THE IMAGE OF THE BUILD

The basic elements which give the storefront its character shall be retained and repaired. These include:

- | | |
|-----------------------------|----------------------|
| (a) Original window height | (e) Original piers |
| (b) Original sill height | (f) Original lintels |
| (c) Doorways | (g) Transoms |
| (d) Proportions of openings | (h) Decorative work |

Piers or columns which divide the storefront into bays, and lintels or cornices which separate the storefront from the upper floors should not be covered or removed. Windows should not be filled-in. Sill height should be maintained. Original transoms, window configuration, doors, and ornamentation should be retained, repaired, or replicated. Where no original materials or detailing remains, new work should be compatible with the original character of the building.

3. **WINDOWS: THE "EYES" OF THE BUILDING SHOULD REMAIN OPEN**

Perhaps the most distinctive features of any building are its openings. The original pattern of window openings and their shape and configuration should not be altered. Window openings should not be reduced, enlarged, or filled-in on street facades. Replacement windows should match the original in size, shape, and design.

Original window openings and storefronts should be retained.

4. **SIGNS: AVOID CLUTTER. THE SIMPLER AND CLEANER THE BETTER**

Signs should be compatible with the district and in character with the building they are on. The removal of inappropriate and extraneous signs is encouraged. New or altered signs should meet the following guidelines:

- a. Signs should be compatible with the architecture of the building they are attached to.
- b. The design of signs should capitalize on the special character of the area and reflect the nature of the business they are identifying.
- c. Large signs should be kept flat against buildings and not detract from the architecture of the building or cover architectural details.
- d. Generally, signs should be attached to storefront lintels, or at the height of the lintel.
- e. Small projecting signs may be used for identification. These may take the form of projecting symbol signs.
- f. Signs should be adequately spaced from other signs for good visibility and should be approximately the same size and shape, placed in the same general location, and at the same height as other signs of similar businesses.
- g. Obsolete signs and unused sign supports should be removed. New roof top signs and signs which extend above the roof line of a building or above the window sill line of the 2nd floor of buildings should not be permitted.

5. **ORNAMENTATION: KEEP ORIGINAL ORNAMENTATION, IT MAKES YOUR BUILDING SPECIAL**

The existing architectural features that give buildings their character such as decorative piers, columns, brackets, decorative brickwork and terra cotta should be preserved. The addition of inappropriate and out of character features should be avoided.

6. **MASONRY CLEANING: NEVER SANDBLAST**

Cleaning of masonry is generally discouraged. If cleaning is necessary, it should be done by the least damaging method available, ranging from washing with a mild detergent and soft bristle brushes to chemical cleaning. Sandblasting is not an acceptable method for cleaning: it destroys brick and lessens the life of buildings.

Sandblasting brick severely damages the surface.

7. **SILICONE: AVOID WATER REPELLENT COATINGS**

Water repellent coatings (silicone) should never be used unless there is actual water penetration through the masonry units themselves, and the problem is not caused by faulty or missing mortar, poorly functioning gutters and downspouts, or rising ground water.

If water is penetrating through the masonry to interior surfaces, then only the affected area should be treated, and only after the masonry has been allowed to dry.

Painting is more permanent and provides a good measure of waterproofing to masonry walls. This procedure is highly recommended for the renewal of buildings in the district.

8. PAINTING: IF IT WAS PAINTED, PAINT IT AGAIN

Painted brick buildings should be repainted rather than stripped or cleaned to reveal the natural brick color.

The color of trim and decorative detailing on a building should contrast with the wall paint color. Light colored buildings should have darker trim and dark colored buildings should have lighter trim. At no time should the detailing and trim be painted the same color as the walls.

9. REPOINTING: USE THE RIGHT CEMENT AND MATCH MORTAR JOINTS

Older, softer bricks require a softer mortar. It is important to simulate the old lime and sand mortars, both in appearance and in composition. This will insure that during periods of freezing and thawing, the expansion and contraction characteristics of brick and mortar will be nearly the same. If a hard, modern mortar with a high portland cement content is used, the softer bricks may suffer irreparable damage during freeze/thaw periods.

A mixture consisting of one part of white masonry cement, two parts of lime, and seven to nine parts of the smallest available mesh sand (to match the original sand) is recommended.

In general, the mortar joint should be concave, as this gives the greatest bond of mortar to brick. In restoration work, however, the type of original joint should be matched with new work.

10. APPURTENANCES / AWNINGS: DO NOT COVER IMPORTANT FEATURES

All appurtenances, such as shutters, light fixtures, and signs, should be compatible with the building upon which they are to be installed. The installation of canvas canopies and awnings is permissible but should not obscure or require the removal of significant architectural features. Canopies and awnings made of plastic, wood, or metal shall not be permitted.

11. WALL RESURFACING / WOOD FRAME STRUCTURES: USE WOOD CLAPBOARD

Wood clapboard siding should be used as the repair or replacement material where appropriate, and its use is encouraged as a resurfacing material on wood frame buildings. The use of aluminum or vinyl siding for resurfacing should be avoided. Artificial stone, asbestos, asphalt shingles, and other similar resurfacing materials shall not be used. Architectural features such as cornices, brackets, window sills, and lintels should not be removed or obscured when resurfacing material is applied. Siding should be applied horizontally and all wood siding should be painted.

12. UTILITY/SYSTEM INSTALLATION: PLACE THEM INCONSPICUOUSLY

The installation of utility and mechanical systems such as water or gas meters, and central air conditioning cooling units, should be inconspicuously placed and screening should be provided; the installation of such systems should be avoided on the street facade. Wall or window air conditioning units on the street facade should be avoided.

13. WALLS AND FENCES: RETAIN THE ORIGINAL

Existing retaining walls, gates, and fences should be repaired and retained wherever possible. The installation of chain link fences shall be discouraged on street frontage.

14. PARKING: LOTS SHOULD BE SCREENED AND LANDSCAPED

Parking should be designed so as not to detract from the visual quality of the district.

- a. Screening should be sufficient to minimize the view of parked vehicles from other properties, from the street, and other public areas. Screening may employ masonry walls, landscaping, and fencing. The design of this screening should be compatible with the district.

- b. Within the interior of parking lots, there should be adequate landscaping, including planting islands containing trees to provide shade and to break up large areas of paving.

DEMOLITION: PERMITTED ONLY UNDER CERTAIN CIRCUMSTANCES

Demolition of existing buildings shall not be permitted unless one of the following conditions exist:

- a. Demolition has been ordered by the Director of Buildings & Inspections for reasons of public health and safety;
- b. The owner can demonstrate to the satisfaction of the Historic Conservation Board that the structure cannot be reused nor can a reasonable economic return be gained from the use of all or part of the building proposed for demolition;
- c. The demolition request is for an inappropriate addition, or a building of a later period, and the demolition of said structure will not adversely affect the streetscape as determined by the Historic Conservation Board.

BUILDINGS OF A LATER PERIOD

Buildings of a later period were generally constructed after most of the rest of the district was built and are of a different architectural character than the district due to their age and the different character of their scale, material, and detailing. The following "later period" buildings are subject to this review criteria:

4110 Hamilton
4143 Hamilton
4147 Hamilton at Spring Grove
White Castle
Standard Oil Station at Spring Grove

Additions, alterations and rehabilitation to the above buildings shall either be compatible with the style and character each possesses, or shall cause the above building to become more compatible with the district.

NEW CONSTRUCTION/ADDITIONS: COMPATIBLE BUT NOT COPIES

New construction should not try to imitate the old, but should be compatible with respect to the following:

MATERIALS – The type of materials and their color, texture, scale and detailing should be compatible with those of the District and/or the original building. Predominate materials are brick with stone, wood, or cast iron trim.

SCALE – The scale of new work and its constituent parts should be compatible with the District and/or the original building and the scale of its parts.

FORM – The shape, massing, and proportions of new work should be compatible with the District and the original building. Openings are primarily vertical.

DETAILING – The detailing including, but not limited to, the following features and their placement on additions and new construction should be compatible with the District:

walls	roofs	windows	doors
eaves	cornices	chimneys	porches
appurtenances			

HEIGHT – The height of an addition should not exceed the height of the original building. Buildings in the Northside Historic District vary from 1 to 3 stories high. The height of new buildings should be

comparable to the height of existing buildings and should not detract from the character and appearance of the District.

SETBACK – The setback of new buildings should be comparable to the setbacks of existing buildings in the District. Buildings are commonly sited on the sidewalk and 3-10 feet from adjacent buildings or attached to them.

HISTORIC INTEGRITY – Compatibility of new work to original work is required, but imitation of old work in new construction should be avoided. If original openings are filled in on the side or rear elevations, the outline of the original opening should remain apparent by setting new infill material back from the surface and leaving original sills and lintels in place.

THESE GUIDELINES ARE NOT CAST IN CONCRETE.

- They do not force you to do work on your property.
- They do not force you to "take the property back to the way it was."
- They can be waived or adjusted if the owner shows that sticking to the guidelines would cost more than he/she could afford.
- Ordinary repair and maintenance does not require review by the Historic Conservation Board.

Applicants are encouraged to consult with Historic Conservation Board staff before they finalize their plans and formally apply for a building permit.